



## PRIME MINISTER

Press Statement No.590  
9 November 1975

### THE BUDGET - THE SENATE DELAY

Our nation is now entering the fifth week of the Constitutional crisis caused by the action of the Senate in blocking the Budget. Amid all the worry and anxiety caused by the actions of the Senate, the message I wish to bring tonight is basically one of reassurance. The really important thing that has happened in Australia over the last three or four weeks has been the proof of the basic strength and steadiness of the Australian people, their political maturity, their common sense in circumstances which for all of us are new, challenging and uncharted.

There has been this paradox: that on an issue containing the seeds of deep division and disruption there has been a display of national unity and common purpose from the vast majority of ordinary Australians and from all sections of the community such as we have not had on any issue since the war. I have drawn great reassurance from it, and I believe all Australians, whatever their political persuasion and indeed whatever their opinion on this specific issue may be, can take reassurance from it - confidence about the fundamental stability and maturity of our country.

Not the least encouraging, not the least remarkable has been the clear support shown for the principle of Parliamentary democracy by our fellow Australians, born overseas. In so many cases they came here from countries either where there was no genuine Parliamentary democracy or where irresponsibility and factionalism made the Parliamentary system unworkable. They are now appalled to find that the right of the elected government to govern - twice elected in less than three years - is now being challenged in Australia.

The second ground for reassurance is the loyalty and solidarity already shown by the Public Service throughout Australia. Clearly the basic business of the nation cannot continue without their co-operation. For instance, while money is certainly available to pay all pensions, the actual delivery of payment requires that officers can continue to do their job. It's because of this that the Government is determined to do all within its Constitutional and legal power to ensure that pensions are paid, that Public Servants can do their job and that the Armed Forces can continue at their posts.

Public Servants will be paid in the normal way on 13 and 27 November. Thereafter the banks - the private banks as well as the Commonwealth Bank and the State Government banks - are concerned to ensure that their customers, whose incomes are threatened, obtain credit during this difficult time. The Government welcomes the statement by the banks that they will do all they can to provide credit. We shall co-operate with them. That is, the very least we could do for the loyal Public Servants who are sticking by their posts.

The third ground for confidence and reassurance is the attitude of the industrial movement and increasingly, as the implications of the Senate's conduct become clearer, the attitude of the business community. I acknowledge that before the Budget, most businessmen would have preferred a change of Government. But it's been very clear for the past month that what most businessmen now want is for our Budget to pass and for that Budget to be given a real chance to work. The Budget spells out the way to economic recovery - the sole but difficult, delicate path to recovery.

We emphasised the need for the restoration of investment confidence. That's very important. But there's another side to the coin. We seek co-operation from employees - their unions and associations and we are getting it. That co-operation is the whole key to the chance of restoring investment profitability. But how long can we expect it to last if the Budget is further stalled?

It cannot be repeated too often: the Senate could not now be doing what it is except for the death of a Labor Senator, Senator Milliner, and the scandalous unconstitutional appointment of a non-Labor replacement. This whole crisis would not be happening in the way that it is happening except for the death of Senator Milliner and its shameful aftermath.

The people of Australia are now very properly asking "where will it end?" It will end as soon as the Senate stops this nonsense, abides by the Constitution and passes the Budget and allows the duly elected government to govern. It will end tomorrow - if the Senate stops stalling and does its Constitutional duty and its duty by Australia.

In a very real sense, this issue will be decided by the Australian people. If we all refuse to be panicked, if we all refuse to be blackmailed, if we hold firm together, I cannot but believe that there are enough men and women in the Senate who, seeing their duty and responsibility, will also do their duty.

CANBERRA. A.C.T.